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Vicente Lusitano
Motets
THE MARIAN CONSORT

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Vicente Lusitano

Motets

THE MARIAN CONSORT

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'Adoration of the Magi' (1506–7)
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Vicente Lusitano (d. after 1561)
Motets

68:20

THE MARIAN CONSORT

RORY MCCLEERY Artistic Director

1	—	**Praeter rerum seriem**	8vv 8:23
2	—	**Regina caeli**	5vv 4:11
3	—	**Aspice Domine**	5vv 7:47
4	—	**Ave spes nostra, Dei genitrix**	5vv 5:00
5	—	**Salve regina**	6vv 6:50
6	—	**Heu me, Domine**	4vv 4:28
7	—	**Emendemus in melius**	5vv 9:21
8	—	**Sancta Maria**	6vv 4:48
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Vicente Lusitano

Motets

As is frustratingly often the case with Renaissance musicians, much remains unknown about the life of Vicente Lusitano – even his surname simply means 'Portuguese'. We can, however, be reasonably confident that he was the first published Black composer. His only surviving printed book of compositions, the *Liber primus epigramatum*, was issued in Rome in 1551.

What biographical information we have for Lusitano comes principally from an encyclopaedia entry by Portuguese Catholic priest Diogo Barbosa Machado in his *Bibliotheca Lusitana* of 1752. From this we know that Lusitano was born in Olivença, became a priest in the order of St Peter, and taught in both Padua and Viterbo 'with great success, receiving high fees from his students'.

Barbosa Machado omits a detail found in one of his sources, a manuscript by João Franco Barreto written in the mid-seventeenth century, which describes Lusitano as 'pardo', a term used to denote a mixed-race person of European and African parentage. Due largely to its involvement in the slave trade, sixteenth-century Portugal had a significant population of people of African descent, and it seems most likely that Lusitano had a Black African mother and a white Portuguese father. Whether by accident or design, this omission by Barbosa Machado has had the effect of erasing this important aspect of Lusitano's identity until recently.

Lusitano's ethnicity may also explain the sparsity of surviving biographical detail. There is no record of his holding a church position, the norm for male composers of the Renaissance, but this is less surprising given that in Portugal, salaried positions in the church were the exclusive preserve of white clergy. Lusitano appears in Rome in the early 1550s in the employ of Dom Afonso de Lencastre, Portuguese ambassador to the Holy See, as music tutor to his son Dinis, to whom the *Liber primus epigramatum* is dedicated. Lusitano praises his pupil's musical skill (unsurprising given the fawning nature of such dedications), but also acknowledges the importance of the family's patronage to his own progress as a musician.

Better known in his own time as a theorist than a composer, Lusitano was involved in one of the most notorious events in sixteenth-century music history. His widely reported debate with Nicola Vicentino, which took place throughout June 1551 in Rome, centred on a performance of Lusitano's motet *Regina caeli*, ideas around permissible chromaticism in music, and the application of the Ancient Greek genera to contemporary composition.

Lusitano was declared the winner, as judged by a panel of musicians including members of the Sistine Chapel. However, as noted by musicologist Robert Stevenson, this was something of a Pyrrhic victory, as 'Vicentino, rather than Vicente, has captured the sympathies of the historians'. Vicentino's revisionist version of events, as presented in his widely disseminated 1555 treatise *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* ('ancient music adapted to modern practice'), would go on to influence generations of Italian composers including Luzzaschi and Gesualdo, and to shape the historical narrative against Lusitano.

Having vanished from historical record, Lusitano reappears in 1561, married and converted to Protestantism and seeking – unsuccessfully – a post at the Württemberg Court in Stuttgart. After this, no further information survives.

Lusitano published a treatise in 1553 in Rome, the *Introduttione facilissima et novissima*, which was reprinted several times in subsequent decades. He was also the author of the manuscript *Tratado de canto de organo*, now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Both works are primarily concerned with improvised counterpoint, with Lusitano's detailed explanations showing the importance of this under-appreciated aspect of sixteenth-century music-making to both performers and composers of the period. The *Tratado* is also the source for Lusitano's best-known work, *Heu me, Domine*: less a fully-fledged composition than an intellectual curio, it is closely related to his writings on improvisation and is designed to demonstrate polyphonic writing using melodic subjects made of chromatic scales. The striking nature of the resulting soundworld, prefiguring Gesualdo, seems well-suited to the penitential text, although this piece in isolation gives a skewed impression of Lusitano as a composer when compared to the more nuanced chromatic writing found in the *Liber primus epigramatum*.

Our selection of motets is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to give an overview of Lusitano's surviving oeuvre, exploring the variety of textures, sonorities and scorings. These range from the buoyantly energetic *Sancta Maria* and *Regina caeli*, the latter peppered with plainchant quotations, to the more sombre polyphony of *Ave spes nostra*, its low, rich scoring lending the overlapping 'Ave' salutations an additional poignancy. *Sancta mater, istud agas*, a setting of a

portion of the *Stabat mater*, is typical of Lusitano's style, with close-knit writing and long, arching phrases seemingly spinning out into eternity before an astonishing final 'Amen' that builds expectation through sequences of descending scales. The similarly scored *Emendemus in melius* is also full of gossamer strands of melody, along with some surprising harmonic and chromatic moments. These are present too in *Aspice Domine*, where Lusitano delights in subverting expectation, as at 'circumcinge eam, Domine'.

In a deliberate act of homage, Lusitano makes clear his respect for one of the most influential musical figures of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Josquin des Prez, choosing to base several of the large-scale motets in the collection on works by his French forebear. Setting the same texts as three of Josquin's most famous Marian motets, Lusitano preserves and emphasizes certain musical characteristics in a loving act of 'parody' (with a dose of 'anything you can do, I can do better' thrown in for good measure!).

In all three of these pieces, Lusitano expands the original texture: in his *Salve regina*, an extra voice allows him to add the plainchant in its entirety as a slow-moving cantus firmus, while taking the distinctive quotations of the plainchant found in a single part in Josquin's five-part setting and exploding these across all of the voices to intensify the repetitive effect.

In *Praeter rerum seriem*, as in *Salve regina*, Lusitano makes unusual use of three equal Altus parts, here in an eight-voice texture (adding two to Josquin's six). He preserves the structure and character of Josquin's original, as well as retaining many melodic features, including the slow-moving *cantus prius factus* in the uppermost voice.

Of the three Josquin parodies, the eight-voice *Inviolata* is perhaps the most striking. Unmistakeably indebted to Josquin's five-voice setting, it is also radically different, exchanging the relatively sparse textures of the early sixteenth century for the denser, more kaleidoscopic polyphony of Lusitano's generation. Preserving Josquin's division of the text into three distinct musical sections, Lusitano also embeds the same structural device at the heart of his work: a canon based on plainchant at the interval of a fifth and the distance of three breves. It is a compositional conceit which does nothing to detract from the sheer beauty of the piece.

Writing in 1982, Robert Stevenson remarked that the next step in Lusitano scholarship, and in the rehabilitation of his reputation, would be the publication of his collected works: 'Only then can his creative genius begin redounding, as it should, to the glory of Black music history'. It is hoped that this recording too will play some small part in the rediscovery of Lusitano's music by a wider audience.

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1 — Praeter rerum seriem

Praeter rerum seriem,
parit Deum hominem
Virgo mater.
Nec vir tangit virginem,
nec prolis originem
novit pater.

Beyond the normal order of this world,
the Virgin mother bore God
in human form.
Still a virgin, she was untouched by man,
nor did the father
know the child's origin.

Virtus sancti spiritus
opus illud caelitus
operatur.
Initus et exitus
partus tui penitus
quis scrutatur?
Dei providentia
quae disponit omnia
tam suave:
tua puerperia
transfert in mysteria,
mater ave.

By the Holy Spirit's power
that work was achieved
from heaven.
Who can understand
the profundity of your labour's
beginning and end?
By God's providence,
which has ordered
everything so perfectly,
guide your children
into the mysteries.
Hail, mother.

2 — Regina caeli

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Marian Antiphon in Paschal Time

Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
For he whom you were worthy to bear, alleluia.
Has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

3 — Aspice Domine

Aspice Domine, quia facta est
desolata civitas plena divitiis:
sedet in tristitia domina gentium:
non est qui consoletur eam, nisi tu Deus noster.
Muro tuo inexpugnabili circumcinge eam, Domine:
et armis tuae potentiae protege eam semper,
Domine Deus noster.

Behold Lord, for the city
that was full of riches is made desolate;
she that was great among the nations sits in sorrow;
and there is none to console her, except you our God.
Encircle her with your impregnable wall, Lord,
and with the might of your power protect her always,
O Lord our God.

4 — Ave spes nostra, Dei genitrix

Ave spes nostra, Dei genitrix Virgo intacta;
ave, illud Ave per angelum accipiens;
ave, concipiens patris splendorem benedicta;
ave, Virgo sanctissima et mater sola intacta.
Te glorificat omnis creatura matrem luminis.
Alleluia.

Hail, our hope, untouched Virgin mother of God;
hail, who accepted that Hail from the angel;
hail, blessed conceiver of the father's splendour;
hail, most saintly Virgin and only chaste mother.
Every creature glorifies you, mother of light.
Alleluia.

5 — Salve regina

Salve regina misericordiae
vita, dulcedo, spes nostra salve.
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae,
ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Marian Antiphon from Trinity until Advent

Hail merciful queen,
our life, our sweetness, our hope, hail.
To you we cry, the exiled children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, our advocate,
your merciful eyes toward us;
and after this our exile, show us
the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.
O gracious, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

6 — Heu me, Domine

Heu me, Domine,
quia peccavi nimis in vita mea.
Quid faciam miser?
Ubi fugiam nisi ad te, Deus meus?

Woe is me, Lord,
for I have sinned greatly in my life.
What should I do, wretch that I am?
Where should I flee if not to you, my God?

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda,
quando caeli movendi sunt et terra.

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death,
on that awful day,
when the heavens and the earth will be moved.

Responds at Matins, Office for the Dead

7 — Emendemus in melius

Emendemus in melius
quae ignoranter peccavimus:
ne subito praeoccupati die mortis,
quaeramus spatium poenitentiae
et invenire non possimus.
Attende, Domine, et miserere,
quia peccavimus tibi.

Let us make amends
for the sins we have committed in ignorance,
lest we should suddenly, at the day of death,
seek a place of repentance
and not be able to find one.
Hear, O Lord, and have mercy,
for we have sinned against you.

Peccavimus Domine cum patribus nostris,
iniuste egimus, iniquitatem fecimus.
Attende, Domine, et miserere,
quia peccavimus tibi.

We have sinned, Lord, with our fathers,
we have acted unjustly, we have done wrong.
Hear, O Lord, and have mercy,
for we have sinned against you.

Psalm 105: 6, Responsory for Ash Wednesday

8 — Sancta Maria

Sancta Maria, succurre miseris,
iuva pusillanimes, refove flebiles;
ora pro populo, interveni pro clero,
intercede pro devoto femineo sexu;
sentiant omnes tuum iuvamen,
quicumque celebrant tuam commemorationem.

Holy Mary, help the wretched,
assist the faint-hearted, comfort the tearful;
pray for the people, intervene for the clergy,
intercede for the faithful female sex;
that all who celebrate your feast day
may feel your help.

Antiphon at First Vespers on Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary

9 — Sancta mater, istud agas

Sancta mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.

Holy mother, do this for me:
imprint the wounds of the crucified
deeply in my heart.

Tui nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
mecum poenas divide.

That of your wounded son,
who so deigned to suffer for me,
I may share the pain.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero.

Make me truly weep with you
and grieve with the crucified,
as long as I live.

Iuxta crucem tecum stare,
te libenter sociare
in planctu desidero.

To stand beside the cross with you,
and gladly join you in mourning,
this I desire.

Amen.

Amen.

Stabat Mater, v. 11–14

Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria,
quae es effecta fulgida caeli porta.
O mater alma Christi carissima:
suscipe pia laudum praeconia.

Nostra ut pura pectora sint et corpora,
quae nunc flagitant devota corda et ora.
Tua per precata dulcisona:
nobis concedas veniam per saecula.

O benigna, O regina, O Maria,
quae sola inviolata permansisti.

You are inviolate, whole and chaste, Mary:
you who are the shining gate of heaven.
Kind mother, most dear to Christ:
accept our faithful proclamations of praise.

That our souls and bodies might be pure,
now devoted hearts and mouths make entreaty.
Through your prayers' sweet sounds
grant us grace for all time.

O beneficent, O queen, O Mary,
you alone remain inviolate.

The Marian Consort

The Marian Consort (TMC) is a vocal ensemble that presents bold and thrilling performances for audiences across the UK, Europe and North America. Led by founder and director, Rory McCleery, the group is composed of the very best singers in a flexible, intimate ensemble, allowing clarity of texture and subtlety of interpretation that illuminates the music for audience and performer alike. TMC features regularly on BBC Radio 3, and has released twelve recordings to critical acclaim, praised for 'precision and pellucid textures' (*The Times*).

Hailed as 'brilliant discoverers, and exponents, of rare repertoire' (*The Observer*), The Marian Consort performs music from the fifteenth century to the present day, with a focus on bringing to light and championing lesser-known works by composers such as Vicente Lusitano, Raffaella Aleotti and Jean Maillard, reinvigorating their music for today's listeners. Creating new music is of vital importance to TMC, and in recent years it has commissioned Electra Perivolaris, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Roderick Williams, David Fennessy and Ben Rowarth.

The Marian Consort is a pioneer of projects which take audiences beyond the confines of the traditional concert, most notably 'Lusitano Remixed' and 'Breaking the Rules', the latter a staged concert-drama based on the life and crimes of Carlo Gesualdo called 'daring and vivid' by *The Guardian*. Other highlights include a debut at the BBC Proms; performances in the Bascule Chamber underneath London's Tower Bridge; the premiere of Dani Howard's *Unbound* at Three Choirs Festival; and a Wigmore Hall recital presented in partnership with BBC Radio 3. TMC will make its debut tour of Japan in 2023.

THE MARIAN CONSORT

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